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The fluke of a blue whale rises over Monterey Bay this weekend. Whales have been spotted in abundance of late, drawn by krill blooms caused by a wind-driven phenomenon known as upwelling.

# Close Encounters

KRILL BLOOM DRAWS BLUE AND HUMPBACK WHALES TO BAY

*Whales and Whaling*

By JASON HOPPIN

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MOSSLANDING — Drawn by an abundance of food, pods of whales are frolicking across Monterey Bay, delighting oceangoing whale-watchers who spent the weekend thrilled by one of nature's greatest shows.

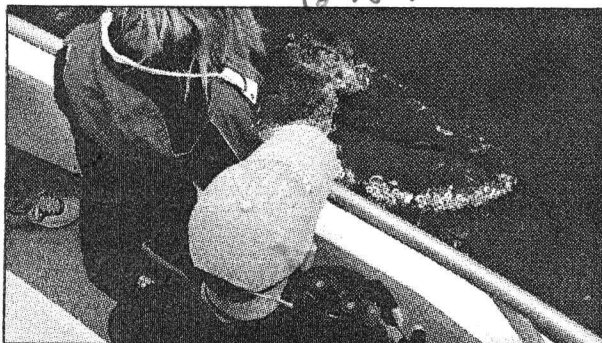
Boat captains estimated scores of whales — including about 30 majestic blue whales, the largest creature to have ever roamed the earth — feeding on krill, particularly over the deep-water Soquel Canyon, where one boat reported a Saturday “feeding frenzy” by 50 whales.

“There was an extraordinary number of humpback and blue whales,” said Nancy Black, a marine biologist with Monterey Bay Whale Watch. “Saturday was the big day.”

Playful humpbacks are regular guests of the Central Coast, but endangered blue whales usually don't make an appearance until later in the year. While fewer than the 70 humpbacks currently estimated by Black to be in the Monterey Bay, the large presence of blue whales is unusual.

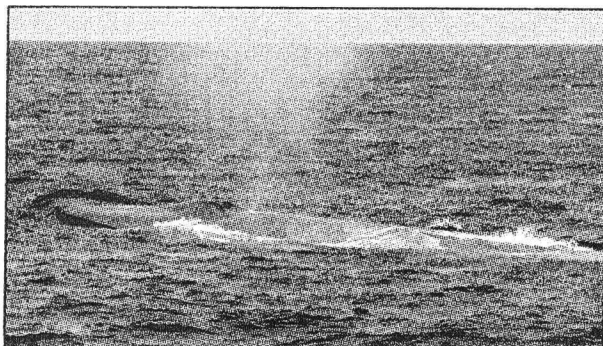
The whale crush is driven by spring winds, which shove warmer surface water aside and allow cooler, nutrient-rich waters to well up from the bottom of the sea. That “upwelling” causes a boom in lower-level species such as krill and squid, which feed whales and

SEE WHALES ON A2



KEN STAGNARO/CONTRIBUTED

A humpback whale swims alongside a tour boat Saturday on the Monterey Bay. Delighted whale-watchers were treated to a 90-minute show as whales fed on krill.



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A blue whale breaches the surface this weekend on Monterey Bay.

## ON THE NET

For a slideshow of whale photos, visit [santacruzsentinel.com](http://santacruzsentinel.com) and click on this story.



KEN STAGNARO/CONTRIBUTED

A humpback whale seems to pose for the paparazzi alongside a tour boat Saturday on Monterey Bay. Scores of whales have invaded the Monterey Bay.

## WHALES

Continued from A1

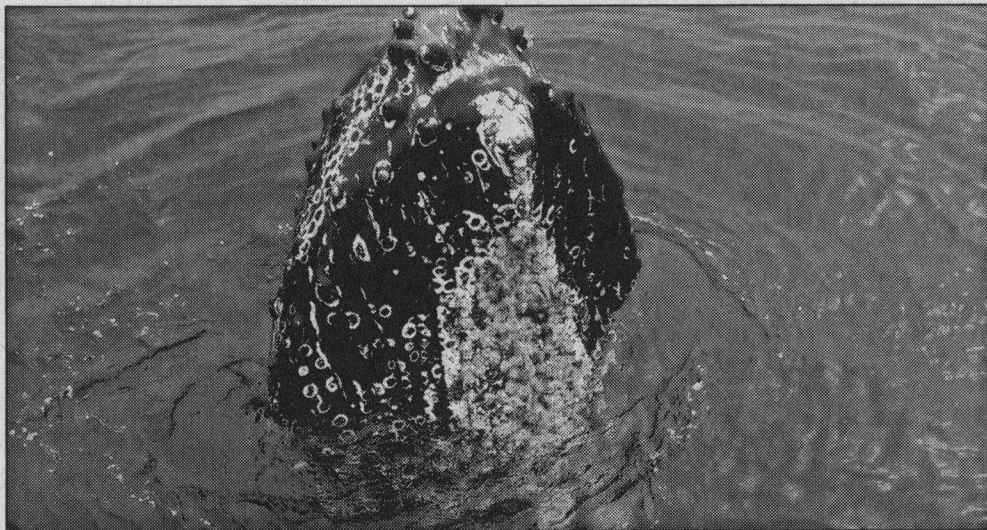
dolphins, respectively.

Ken Stagnaro of Santa Cruz-based Stagnaro Charters found a "feeding frenzy" over Soquel Canyon, where schools of krill can get pinned against canyon walls by the tides and giving whales an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord.

"Side by side, dozens of blue and humpback whales continually surface-lunged at massive schools of krill, sometimes swimming within mere yards of the boat," Stagnaro wrote in an email to the Sentinel. He was about seven miles off shore. "We sat nearly motionless for nearly 90 minutes as the largest animals in the world gorged on the sea surface for everyone to see."

Lunge-feeding is a technique of baleen whales, which swim beneath their prey and can release a circle of air bubbles, called a "bubble net." With the prey trapped and confused by air bubbles, the whale lunges skyward from the depths with mouth agape, breaching the surface.

Black also has spotted



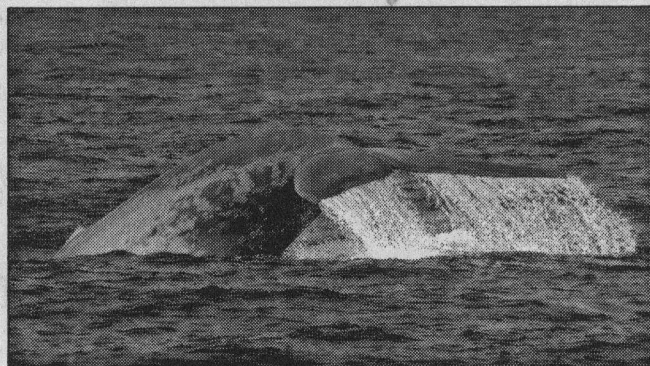
KEN STAGNARO/CONTRIBUTED

A humpback whale spy-hopping Saturday during a 'feeding frenzy' over Soquel Canyon. Marine biologists estimate about 100 blue and humpback whales have invaded Monterey Bay.

numerous killer whales, likely here to hunt down the thousands of dolphins found offshore. She said the orcas have also been playful, spotting some while ferrying a tour group around the bay on Sunday.

"There's just lots of wild-life around right now, lots of animals, lots of whales," Black said. "It's because of the wind."

Follow Sentinel reporter Jason Hoppin at [Twitter.com/scnewsdude](https://twitter.com/scnewsdude)



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Water runs off the fluke of a giant blue whale in this photo, taken over the weekend in the Monterey Bay.